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ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO 16TH LOKSABHA ELECTION, 2014



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ABSTRACT

It is a well known fact for a nation to develop, the participation of both men and women is required. But unfortunately, India is far behind this scenario of participation. After so many years of Independence, Indian policy makers have witnessed very few representations of women in the loksabha as well as in the rajya sabha, let alone the participation at the panchayat level. For empowering women, many laws have been made. Media has also been very active participant in giving voice to women.



Thus, this paper has worked on the evaluation of the role of media in empowering women and increasing their participation and electoral representation in the political arena of India. This research paper has studied different media used by women candidates to back up their political gaining and empowerment. Paper evaluated the role of social media in erecting the image of women candidates. This paper has worked on the past and present status of women electoral representation in the country. In this study, the research methodology used is based on the secondary data. Data has been collected from a number of sources like books, journals, research articles available online and publications by government agencies. A part from these sources of information, newspapers and websites has also been used for collecting data.

KEYWORDS : *Electoral Representation of Women , Indian policy makers , voice to women.*

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY:

Representation of women in Indian Parliament has increased since independence. The statistics of women representation in Indian Parliament have shown the positive sign. But the pace of this change is very slow and dismal. After 68th years of Independence, 16th Lok Sabha had 11.23 percent of women membership with 15th Lok Sabha having 10.87 percent of women members. Women are under-represented in Indian Parliament. This disappointing fact is attributed to the

practice of gender biasness which exists in Indian society since many centuries. Gender biasness is a serious issue to ponder over. The world leaders taken note to eliminate gender discrimination and bring the women empowerment through various policies and schemes. In India, with the social and economic development, the need for women education and their participation in different sector is being realized. This realization made the customs of purdha (veil system), female infanticide, child marriage; sati system (self-immolation by the women with their husbands), dowry system and the state of permanent widowhood either totally removed or checked to an appreciable extent after independence through legislative measures. With a view to narrow down the gap between men and women in parliament, women reservation bill is proposed which reserve 33 percent of seats in Parliament and state legislative assemblies for women. Implementation of such quotas for elections to Panchayats has given positive results. Women have displayed their leadership potential in villages. Some great women leaders like Late Indira Gandhi, Pratibha Patil, Mamta Bannerjee, Sushma Swaraj and such others, in our country have always supported the fact that women are the good leaders and their representation in parliament should be encouraged. It is a well-known fact that half of the potential of a nation's progress lies in women. The equal and active participation of women lead the nation towards development. In the last few decades, women participation as a party worker in the political parties has been very active. Giving tickets to them by their respective parties to contest the election has always been a welcoming step. Women representation in parliament assists in raising women pertaining issues on the crucial platform of Indian democracy. Taking attention from the other elected members and policy makers, these issues will help out in providing equal status to women in Indian society.

Media in its part has an important role in empowering democratization of India. Different media outlets serve as a strong weapon for backing up the position of women in different sector that include Indian politics also. Print and electronic media, well-known platforms, raises the voices of women candidates in the political arena and bring forth their potential to govern in forth among the people. With the advancement in technology and development, emergence of new media has also an impact generating role in boosting up women candidature. Many elites women candidate has become tech-savvy and actively using social media to advance their ideology regarding crucial issues of development. New media platform serve as efficient way to keep contacts with the new generation of the country. This paper has worked on the past and present status of women electoral representation in the country. Evaluation of the media's role and its impact in increasing electoral representation of women is done in this paper. The effectiveness of media is judged on the perspective of empowerment of women in the political arena of India. Now-a-days, women candidates used different media outlets to support their voices. Among these media, use of social media is growing which is easy to use, impactful, efficient distribution, low cost and has wide access. Thus, this research paper has studied different media used by women candidates to back up their political gaining and empowerment. Paper evaluated the role of social media in erecting the image women candidates.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

- To evaluate uses of media by women political leaders for their empowerment.
- To study the role of media in encouraging the political interest among women.
- To evaluate the number of women contestants in the loksabha election with special reference to 16th loksabha election.
- To evaluate the role of media in increasing women electoral representation in the loksabha election of India.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

"Despite all the claims of giving greater representation to women in 2014 Lok Sabha elections, of the total 1325 candidates fielded by the three major political parties (Congress, BJP, and AAP) just about 12 % happen to be women. AAP has announced 59 female candidates for 2014 polls, the saffron party has selected only 38 women candidates. AAP has offered a meager 13.59 % tickets to female candidates followed by Congress (12.96 %), and BJP (8.88 %)." DNA India, Zee Research Group.

"Representation of women members in Lok Sabha and their participation in general an election as contestants has increased. General Election- 2009 sent the highest number of women in Lok Sabha, 59, while in previous House the number was 45. Women participation in contesting election has been much lower as compared to men. Up till Ninth General Election women participation was 30 times lesser than men, though Tenth onwards the participation improved." Press Information Bureau , Government of India, Election Commission.

"Parties field fewer women because voters lack faith in women leaders' abilities — a vicious cycle we need to break Political parties and voters are equally to blame for the low representation of women in Parliament. One factor driving this is a bias on the part of political parties, the notion that women candidates cannot be relied on to win elections. They are believed to lack access to the political networks and resources that men have." The Hindu, Business Line.

WOMEN RESERVATION BILL:

To narrow down the gap between man and woman in parliament, the concept of women reservation was brought. The Bill includes the provision of reservation of one-third of the total available seats for women in national, state, or local governments. This will ensure reservation for women at each level of legislative decision-making, starting with the Lok Sabha, down to state and local legislatures. The proposed legislation to reserve 33.3 percent seats in Parliament and state legislatures for women was drafted first by the H D Deve Gowda-led United Front government. The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on September 12, 1996. Though it has been introduced in Parliament several times since then, the Bill could not be passed because of lack of political consensus. The supporters of the bill opine to bring gender equality through this bill. The presence of women in parliament will be helpful in raising the issue concerning the women like exploitation, abuse, violence, discrimination. The proposed bill will be helpful in the struggle of women in getting equal and respectable status in Indian society. But oppositions of this bill hesitate to nurture the women's equal status in society. Various political parties have staunchly opposed it because they fear many of their male leaders would not get a chance to fight elections if 33.3 percent seats are reserved for women. The Bill has also been opposed by politicians from the socially and economically backward classes. They argue that reservation would only help women of the elitist groups to gain seats, therefore causing further discrimination and under-representation to the poor and backward classes.

33.3 per cent seats in panchayat elections have been reserved for women already. This empowerment reflects the leadership potential of women in building the nation. The experience of women's reservation at the panchayat level has been very encouraging. A million women are being elected to the panchayats in the country every five years. This is the largest mobilisation of women in public life in the world. The Bill had been referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice, and Personnel, which gave its report in December 2009. The central government cleared the Bill on February 25, 2010. Rajya Sabha has passed the bill and yet to pass from Lok Sabha.

Women Candidate in 16th Loksabha Election:

16thloksabha election held in the year 2014 conducted in 9 phases from 7 April 2014 to 12 May 2014 by the Election Commission of India. In the 2014 lokSabhaElections, 8251 candidates contested the elections for 543 seats, out of which 668 were women and 7,578 were men. The percentage of contested women in the 2014 election is around 8%. 5 Transgenders also contested the polls this Elections. In 2009 LokSabhaelection, data reveals that a total of 8070 candidates contested for 543 seats, out of which 556 were Women candidate which is around 6.89%. The percentage of women contesting election is very low and dismal. This statistics may have many reasons and causes behind it for example political party's reluctance to promote women candidate to a higher position. Though election manifesto includes support for women but on ground reality these things are not materialized. While doing comparative study of the two consecutive General Election i.e. Loksabha election of 2009 and 2014, we found the percentage of women contesting election has increased. Though the difference is very meager but still a positive trend is shown in the two election.

Table No. 1

Year	Seats	Women Candidates	winning
2014	543	668	61
2009	543	556	59

Evaluating the past held loksabha election we found the number of women contestant crossed the mark of 100 in 1980 for the 7thloksabha election. It is in 2014 for the 16thloksabha election, when the number of women contestant is highest, i.e. 668. The second highest number from history till the present time is in the year 1996 for the 11thloksabha election, the number of women contestant is second highest which is 599. From the below graph, it is seen that the number of women contestant has increased since 1957. Interestingly, this the growth in numbers is continuous with a sharp rise in 1996 having number 599 and some fluctuation also occur in the year 1977 and 1988. These fluctuation might have their own reasons.

Women representation in Indian Parliament are continuous since 1951 but comparatively the number is very small. They represent very small percent of number in the parliament. The 16th Lok Sabha has the highest number of women members ever at 61, compared to 59 women members in 2009. The least number of women members was in 1977 followed by 1971 and 1957. It is important to understand that the rising numbers of women is an encouraging sign to pave the way for greater political participation of women. Below is the table showing number of women MPs in various lok sabha.

Table No.2

The reflection Women MPs in percentage reflect the pathetic story of our Indian democracy. Women share in Parliament is started with 4.5% in the year 1951 and till the 2014 election, the increased in percentage is not much impressive.

Interesting fact is this that the winning percentage of women in the 16th General Elections is 9.13percent while that of Men's is 6.36 percent. The Average number of contestants per seat is 15.2 in 2014. The winning percentage of women contestant is higher than the male contestant. This fact reflects women's competitive ability. Consistently the success rate of women has been higher over the years than men. Success rate is the number of winners against the total contestants in that category. Women have had a greater success rate than Men in every single election. In some years, the difference

has been quite stark. In 1971, the success rate for men was 18percent, whereas it was 34percent for women, which is twice that of men. For the current Lok Sabha, the success rate was 6.36percent for men and 9.13percent for women.

Between 1957(the earliest data available) and 2015, the total number of women contestants has increased from 45 to 668. There is a 15 fold increase in the number of women contesting. Evaluating data for male contestants for the same years, the number has increased from 1474 to 7583, a five- fold increase. The 15 fold increase in women contestants indicates towards the growing appetite for women to enter the political fray and willingness to be part of political decision-making.

ROLE OF MEDIA:

In India, Media act as a powerful tool to disseminate information. It plays important role in opinion formation. Different media has different access. During election time, Indian media get active at its peak to cover all the aspect of the news. In India, Elections are considered as a democratic festival and every one celebrate it with vigorous Zeal and in a responsible manner. Any activity or any issue spread like a fire in the forest by immense effort of Indian media. These media include Print media, electronic media, and social media. News channels, newspaper, Radio channels, Facebook, twitter, all get flood with election news and election stories. Among media there exists a healthy competing attitude as well as dutiful attitude towards the common people of the country. Media led the people to think over the issue which mass population has either neglected or not get access to information issues. Women empowerment is one those issue which media has raised from time to time and highlighted it during the election hour. Stories on women reservation bill, women education, Gender inequality, child marriage, discouraging sex ratio, women empowerment, women representation in parliament are all issue which has gain the attention of the common man and compel them to think and bring change in society.

Media has a large role in making people sensitive towards the women issue. With the help of diverse forms of media many women related issue has come to the limelight and gain the people support for fighting against women insensitiveness. For example Delhi Gang Rape, female foeticide, female education, domestic violence. During election Political Parties leader know it very well that they cannot neglect women voter nor they can neglect women contestants. They have to include them to show gender parity in their party's agenda irrespective of the small number of the women contestants.

With the efficient and prudent use of media, contestants of the election always polish their image in public. For this they use newspapers, news channels, radio channels, and even new media. Today new media has strong grip on the youth generation. Facebook, Twitter handle, blog, mobile apps are the new, easily access, effective communication tool to spread information and help in forming the public image. New media serve the online platform which is a powerful mechanism for mobilizing popular support. Many women contestants are active on social networking sites. They raise the serious issues on their facebook page, write their opinions and thoughts on twitter handle, publish their story or poems on the blogs. Their activity on social networking sites are followed by large number of people active on such sites. They retain themselves in the media so as to gain public support and vote in the election. Thus media is a powerful and effective tool

Empowerment of women is a long and difficult process which is to be promoted with full public support and this could be successful only when those women who have been suppressed by the male dominated society taking undue advantage of their lack of education and poverty can fight to claim their true place in the society.

Effective Use of Media by Women Candidate for Political Empowerment:

Print media, including Newspapers, Magazine etc, and Electronic media that includes radio, television etc are serving good platform for women candidate to enhance their popularity, their image building for elections. Similarly, social media was also being actively used by different political leaders and election candidates. In the 16th loksabha election, the use social media has rigorously increased given its upsurge usage by youths of the country. The widespread reach, easy to handle, interactive, impactful properties make the social media popular among the political leaders and election candidates to outshine their images. With the same objective few women leaders and women electoral representative have make their online presence on social networking sites such as twitter, facebook etc. for their support in the 16th loksabha elections.

Sushma Swaraj, external affairs minsters, has her presence on social media like facebook, twitter. She has around 53000 fans on her facebook community page and around 3 lakh followers on twitter. Swaraj does not have her own YouTube Channel, but has a separate playlist of her selected speeches. There are 33 videos in the playlist, with a collective duration of 16+ hours.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

In this study, the research methodology used is based on the secondary data. Data has been collected from a number of sources like books, journals, research articles available online and publications by government agencies. A part from these sources of information, newspapers and websites has also been used for collecting data.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Election in India is the big democratic festival. India, being the largest democratic country, celebrated the festival of election with zeal and with responsible attitude. This festival gains the attention of people and media from worldwide. In such a huge festive event, it is dismal to conclude that the women participation with respect to men is very low. Men and women are considered to carry equal potential in nation development. The poor participation of women in election and their small number in parliament deprived the nation half of its potential. In such situation, polarization in society occurs, which hardly brings prosperity.

Media act as a supportive tool for the empowerment of the women. In political arena, women have always been in a minority. Media has effectively gained the attention of people towards such minority representation in the Parliament. Whether it is empowerment of women or women reservation bill, media has an active participation of their coverage. Print media, Electronic media, now-a-days social media are vigilant for the crime against women and raises awareness for their security. Through diverse media channels, sensitivity towards women has increased.

Women's presence in political arena is small in number. Though they represent a minority section in the parliament, yet their persistent presence from the first election till now in the political life reflect their determination and struggle towards bringing equal status in society as well as in the decision making arena. This is a daunting fact that after 68th years of independence, women are still struggling to gain their identity as a leader. Women could not even make up to 40% presence in the parliament. Women reservation bill stands as a hope forever.

For a democracy of a country to stand tall, the participation from every sector of the society is required. In India, women electoral representation is equally important as that of men. Media has played a good role in encouraging their participation. From the above figures of election, it is concluded that there is need of revolution in the thought process of every citizen and media would help in bringing

that revolutionary step. More tickets should given to the women member by respective political party and encourage people to vote for them in the election is an important task which needs to exhibited sincerely. For taking nation towards progress, there is a need of commitment from male and female leaders. Only representation in numbers in the parliament will not work alone.

ILLUSTRATIVE SUGGESTIONS:

- Efficient use of media should be there to encourage more participation of women in political arena. Media help in developing a good public image and the proper use of media help more women to win the election.
- Recognition can be provided to women by collective effort, neither by a party nor only by a quota.
- There is a need to change the attitude which says that women should not be the decision maker.
- Gender discrimination should be handled efficiently.
- Political will power is needed to pass the women reservation bill and reduce the gender gap between men and women.

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